

# Manchester United and Tottenham set up Europa League final, one win away from Champions League spot

For Manchester United or Tottenham, a miserable campaign will end in Europa League glory.

Despite both teams languishing in the bottom half of the Premier League, the Champions League is now just one game away.

That's the reward on offer after the two troubled English clubs advanced to the final of Europe's second-tier competition on Thursday.

United beat Athletic Bilbao 4-1 in the semifinal second leg at Old Trafford and won 7-1 on aggregate. Tottenham won 2-0 away at Bodo/Glimt to seal a 5-1 aggregate victory.

It sets up an all-English Europa League final for the second time in six years after Chelsea beat Arsenal to lift the trophy in 2019.

"If we don't win the final, it means nothing for us," United coach Ruben Amorim said. "It's hard to describe what it's like to be manager of this club. You want to give them (the fans) something, because we've been so disappointing in the Premier League."

United came back from 1-0 down at halftime against Bilbao, with Mason Mount coming off the

bench to score twice after the break. Casemiro and Rasmus Hojlund were also on target.

Dominic Solanke and Pedro Porro struck for Tottenham against Bodo/Glimt in Norway.

The final is in Bilbao on May 21.

"It's an unbelievable feeling," Spurs defender Micky van de Ven said. "We've had a tough season, but we're one game away from winning silverware."

A major title, alone, would be enough to salvage what has otherwise been a season to forget for both United and Spurs. But the added prize of a place in the lucrative Champions League would put the winner back among Europe's elite next term.

That hasn't looked likely for either team for most of the campaign as they have languished closer to the relegation zone than the top five. United is 15th in the standings having lost a club record 16 games in the Premier League. It is also certain to record its worst-ever points total in the modern era, as well as its lowest finish.

For Tottenham, it's even



worse — sitting one place below United after a club record-equaling 19 losses in the Premier League.

Now, one of those teams has the chance to effectively erase their woeful domestic form by winning the final, which will be the fourth time they have faced each other this season.

Spurs won all three of the previous encounters — twice in the league and also in the English League Cup.

"We are struggling, both of us, so I don't know what is going to happen," Amorim said. "That is a good thing and a bad thing with this team. I never know."

turned the game. He spun and curled a low shot past Bilbao goalkeeper Julen Agirrezabala 10 minutes after coming on.

Casemiro headed United in front in the 79th and Hojlund scored from close range in the 85th.

Mount got his second when he spotted Agirrezabala off his line in the first minute of stoppage time and fired home from near the halfway line.

It is United's third Europa League final in eight years, having won the competition in 2017.

United won the FA Cup last year and the League Cup in 2023 and this would be a third trophy-winning season in a row.

It would also be Amorim's first for the club after winning two Portuguese league titles with Sporting Lisbon. He described it as "massive."

"For me it's the most important because it's the next one," he said.

Postecoglou prediction Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou insists he always delivers a trophy in his second year in charge.

That was true at his previous clubs Brisbane Roar,

Yokohama F Marinos and Celtic.

But even the most optimistic of Spurs fans must have questioned whether he could maintain that record, given the team's struggles this season.

Now he is one game away from coming good on his statement.

Spurs led 3-1 from the first leg against a Bodo/Glimt team that became the first from Norway to reach a major European semifinal. But the trip to the Aspmyra Stadion, located north of the Arctic Circle, with an artificial playing field, meant there was still some prospect of a comeback.

Two goals in six minutes in the second half killed off any thought of that, with Solanke scoring in the 63rd and Porro adding the second.

Spurs' last trophy was the League Cup in 2008. Conference League Chelsea will play Real Betis in the final of the UEFA Conference League.

Chelsea advanced with a 5-1 on aggregate win against Djurgården — winning the second leg 1-0 through Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall's goal.

## Timberwolves beat Curry-less Warriors 117-93 in Game 2 to even series



MINNEAPOLIS — The Minnesota Timberwolves were stewing over their rough start in Game 1 against Golden State, a reaction coach Chris Finch was pleased to see.

Julius Randle had 24 points and 11 assists to help the Timberwolves capitalize on Warriors star Stephen Curry's absence in a 117-93 victory Thursday that tied the second-round series at a game apiece.

The foundation was laid in an ornery film session with Finch and his staff the day before.

"He was unhappy, and he let us know he was unhappy, and we felt that," Randle said. "We were pretty motivated as a team."

Anthony Edwards finished with 20 points after

an injury scare for the Wolves, who more than tripled their 3-point output from their Game 1 loss when Curry was sidelined by a left hamstring strain that likely will keep him out at least until next week.

Nickel Alexander-Walker added 20 points to spearhead a superb performance by the bench, combining with Donte DiVincenzo and Naz Reid to go 10 for 22 from deep.

"We looked a lot more like ourselves," Finch said.

Jonathan Kuminga and Trayce Jackson-Davis combined to shoot 14 for 17 from the floor for the Warriors. They took nearly five minutes to score, finally breaking through down 13-0 on Jimmy Butler's 3-pointer.

With the NBA's career leading 3-point shooter next to him on the bench, coach Steve Kerr used a kitchen-sink experiment with 14 players getting time.

"But I would still like to win," Butler said. "I think the biggest lesson is don't start off in a hole like we did tonight, and the game maybe could have ended up a little bit differently."

Kuminga, the seventh overall pick in the 2021 draft who dropped out of the rotation at times during the regular season and missed significant time with a sprained right ankle, was a bright spot off the bench. But this Warriors team was already thin on offense with a healthy Curry. "We have to figure out what we're going to be able to do in this series without Steph," Kerr said. "So we gave a lot of people a lot of chances, and some guys really stepped up."

Against the Wolves and their athletic, long and versatile defense, there wasn't much to lean on. Without Curry to worry about, the Wolves had an easier time keeping shooters Buddy Hield and Brandin Podziemski quiet.

## Unnati Hooda, Ayush Shetty Move Into Semifinals Of Taipei Open



Young Indian shuttlers Ayush Shetty and Unnati Hooda continued to impress at the Taipei Open Super 300 badminton tournament, beating their respective rivals in tough three-game contests to progress to semifinals of men's and women's singles events in Taipei on Friday.

Taking the court first, Unnati, the 2022 Odisha Masters and 2023 Abu Dhabi Masters champion, fought hard for 52 minutes to get the better of local shuttler Hung Yi-Ting 21-8 19-21 21-19 in the women's singles quarterfinals. Earlier, the 17-year-old Indian, ranked 53rd in the world as against her opponent's 65th, made short work of another Taipei shuttler Lin Sih Yun 21-12 21-7 in the round of 16.

She will next face top seed Tomoka Miyazaki of

Japan. The Japanese beat Hsiang Lin of Taipei 17-21 21-8 21-17 in another quarterfinal.

The 20-year-old Ayush, a 2023 World Junior Championships bronze medallist, who overcame senior pro Kidambi Srikanth in a hard-fought second-round clash, stunned Canada's seventh seed Brian Yang 16-21 21-14 in a contest that lasted for one hour and 11 minutes to move to the last four stage.

The rising Indian, who had stunned All England Championships runner-up Lee Chia Hao in the opening round, will next take on the winner of the other quarterfinal match between top seed Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei and Indonesia's Moh Zaki Ubaidillah.

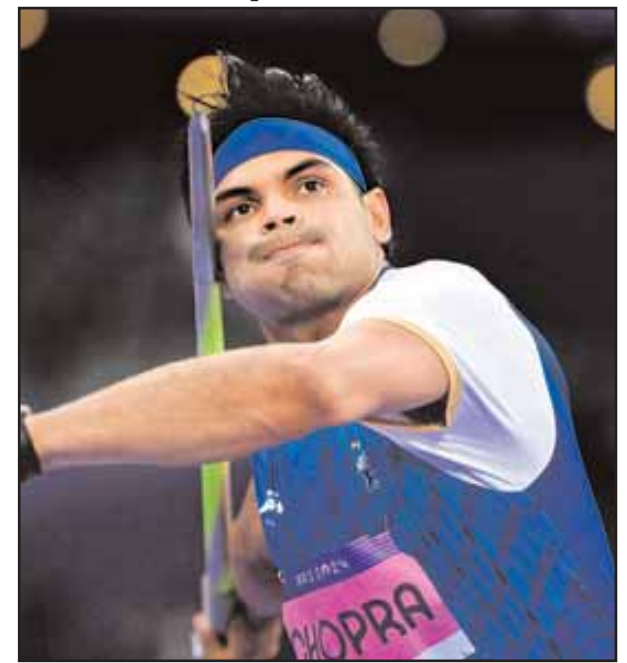
## Neeraj Chopra 'proud of Indian Army' amid rising Indo-Pak tensions, pays special tribute despite abuse from fans

Hostilities have escalated between India and Pakistan, since the devastating Pahalgam terror attack. On Thursday night, India had to neutralise Pakistani drone and missile attacks, which targeted many military sites. Also, a major infiltration bid by suspected terrorists was foiled by the BSF along the International Border in Samba.

Taking to X, Tokyo Olympics gold medallist Neeraj Chopra paid tribute to the Indian Army. He wrote, "We are proud of our Brave Indian Armed Forces who are fighting for our nation against Terrorism. Let's do our part and make sure to follow guidelines to ensure everyone's safety during this time. Jai Hind, Jai India, Jai Army."

Neeraj has been criticised since the Pahalgam attack, because he sent an invite to Arshad Nadeem. But in reality, Neeraj had sent the invite before the terror attack, and Arshad publicly rejected it after the Pahalgam attack. Meanwhile, Neeraj also took to social media and accused fans of abusing his family.

Neeraj is set to participate at the Ostrava Golden Spike 2025 athletics meet on June, in Czech Republic. He was



supposed to participate in the event in 2023 and 2024 too, but pulled out due to injuries.

"I am excited to announce that I will take part in the Golden Spike meeting in Ostrava this year. It's a legendary race and this year will be exceptional. My coach Jan Zeleny has not only won there many times, but also acts as the director of the whole event," Neeraj said.

"I feel great and I hope you will see really nice and far-reaching feasts. I look forward to meeting you all," he added.

In May, he will also be seen in action at the Doha Diamond League and the inaugural Neeraj Chopra Classic in Bengaluru. But due to the ongoing tensions between India and Pakistan, there is a chance that the NC Classic could be cancelled or postponed.

## Aryna Sabalenka Eases Past Anastasia Potapova In Italian Open Second Round



Aryna Sabalenka cruised past Anastasia Potapova and into the third round of the Italian Open with a 6-2, 6-2 victory on Friday. Last year's beaten finalist and current world number one, Sabalenka swept past Russian Potapova in just over an hour at the Foro Italico.

Sabalenka will play Sofia Kenin in the next round after the American beat another Russian in Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova

in straight sets, 6-3, 6-0. The 27-year-old Sabalenka has reached the final of her last four tournaments, with 1000 series wins in both Miami and Madrid.

In the men's tournament, Carlos Alcaraz kicks off his bid for a first Rome title when the third seed faces Serbian qualifier Dusan Lajovic on centre court.

Last year's winner Alexander Zverev is also in action, against Argentina's Camilo Ugo Carabelli.

## Ange Postecoglou On Brink Of Fulfilling Trophy Promise As Tottenham Reach Europa League Final

Ange Postecoglou accused his critics of trying to "tear down" Tottenham's run to the Europa League final as a 2-0 win at Bodo/Glimt kept alive the under-fire Australian's bid to end their 17-year trophy drought. Postecoglou's side will face Manchester United in the final in Bilbao on May 21 after securing a 5-1 aggregate victory in the semi-final second leg in Norway on Thursday. Having won the first leg 3-1 last week, Postecoglou would have been hammered by his growing army of doubters if Tottenham had blown their chance to reach the final. But second-half goals from Dominic Solanke and Pedro Porro ensured the much-maligned manager still has a chance to fulfil his boast that he always wins a trophy in his second season.

Despite languishing in 16th place in the Premier League, Europa League glory for Tottenham would secure a place in next season's Champions League. Whether that will



be enough to spare Postecoglou from the axe is another matter.

The 59-year-old has admitted the general perception outside Tottenham is he faces the sack regardless of the Europa League run because their domestic form has been so bad.

With three games left in the top-flight season, Tottenham are in danger of their worst finish since they were relegated in 1976-77. United are just one place above Tottenham in the English top flight after an equally woeful campaign.

United boss Ruben Amorim has said winning the Europa League won't save their season from being a failure.

But the combative

Postecoglou came out fighting when that was put to him during his press conference after the second leg.

"What do I care what Manchester United think? Why is that relevant to me? Ask the Manchester United manager why he said that. Me, I've said all along this is important," Postecoglou said.

"You know better than me, you follow this club more than I have. What do you think a trophy would do for this club? The question answers itself. It doesn't need me."

"You know what's happening right now is people are fearing that it actually might happen."

"Because it might happen let's see how we can

tear it down somehow and diminish it somehow by saying it's been a poor season and we don't deserve this or we don't deserve that."

"We can do something special." Given his dedication to a polarising gameplan that puts the emphasis on attack, it was instructive that Postecoglou opted for more cautious tactics in the second leg.

The Australian appeared to appreciate the stakes as he adapted to the threat posed by Bodo/Glimt on a tricky artificial pitch in cold and rainy conditions. "I couldn't be prouder of the lads. We knew it would be a difficult place to come. We're well aware of the record they have here and the pitch and all those kind of things," Postecoglou said.

"We fully deserved to win both legs and we're excited, we're in the final."

Tottenham have already beaten United three times this season, winning 3-0 and 1-0 in the Premier League and 4-3 in the Europa Cup.

## IPL Suspended For 'One Week' Amid Rising India-Pakistan Tension, BCCI Says: "New Schedule, Venues Will Be..."



The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has decided to "suspend the remainder of the ongoing IPL 2025 with immediate effect for one week", an official statement released by the IPL Governing Council said on Friday afternoon.

The suspension was expected from the time an IPL 2025 match between Delhi Capitals and Punjab Kings, that was taking place in Dharamsala on Thursday, was called off in the middle of the game following blackout in the adjoining areas. The IPL will announce the dates of the IPL resumption in due course. "Further updates regarding the new schedule and venues of the tournament will be announced in due course after a comprehensive assessment of the situation in consultation with relevant authorities and stakeholders," the IPL

said in a statement. It added that the safety of the players was paramount.

"The decision was taken by the IPL Governing Council after due consultation with all key stakeholders following the representations from most of the franchisees, who conveyed the concern and sentiments of their players, and also the views of the broadcaster, sponsors and fans; while the BCCI reposes full faith in the strength and preparedness of our armed forces, the Board considered it prudent to act in the collective interest of all stakeholders," the BCCI said in a statement.

The cricket body added that it stands with the Indian Armed Forces and the Government of India.

"At this critical juncture, the BCCI stands firmly with the nation."